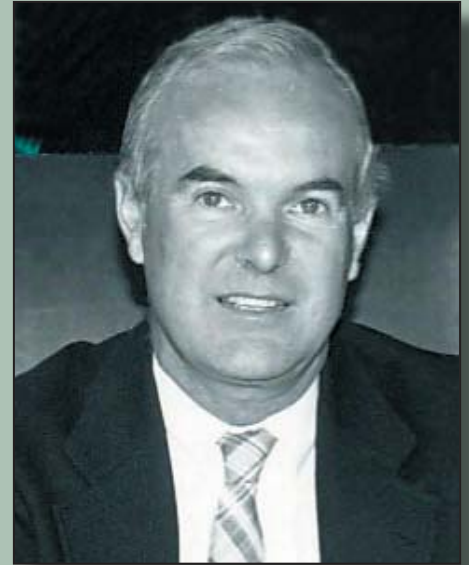


## GOVERNOR BOOTH GARDNER

Booth Gardner was a two-term Governor of Washington State (1985-93) following his service as the first Pierce County Executive. During his last term, he proposed a Five Corner negotiations team of legislative leaders from all four caucuses and his office to draft and pass the Growth Management Act.

Some of his other major accomplishments include the Mental Health Reform law, creation of the Basic Health Plan, Running Start, and educational accountability, including the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL). Programs for children were his first love, including a vaccination program for 1-5 year olds. First Steps and others have provided better health care for the most needy children of our state.



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<b>Interview with:</b>	<b>Booth Gardner</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>August 17, 2005</b>
<b>Interviewed by:</b>	<b>Diane Wiatr</b>
<b>Transcribed by:</b>	<b>Brian McConaghy</b>
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### **Tape 1, Side 1**

**Diane Wiatr:** This interview with Governor Booth Gardner is about the history of Washington State's Growth Management Act (GMA). The date is August 17, 2005, and the interview is taking place at Booth's home on Vashon Island. My name is Diane Wiatr, and I will be interviewing Booth Gardner today.

**Diane:** Booth, tell us what your recollections are about the Growth Management Act when you were Governor.

**Booth Gardner:** My immediate recollection is that the process was a mess. There was nothing concise about it. It was start and stop, sidebars, a very organic process. It came in the late 1980s, early 1990s as a result of tremendous increase in growth in the late 1980s in the state of Washington. The state was growing faster, physically and population wise, than at any time in its history.

Everybody was interested in doing something about growth management because they wanted to stop the tidal wave that was coming in—and that included people in the Legislature, it included environmentalists, it included the business community. And it included party officials, a whole variety of people. So what we did is—we lead up to forming the Growth Strategies Commission. Now that should seem simple enough [laughter], but even that was difficult.

Two key players in this, besides the Governor's Office and members of the Legislature, were Speaker [of the House of Representatives] Joe King and Senate Majority Leader Jeannette Hayner. They were stalwarts in this process. King, because he got tired of the counties coming to him asking for money—there wasn't that much money at that time because growth comes before revenue—and the counties were just beating up on him for more money to be able to start being ahead of the process by which they can make fresh decisions with regards to siting and management and nature. So, he got very interested in it and he started to lead the charge.

He had administrative chairs, what people call the Steel Magnolias, who did a good job of working with him. His forte wasn't so much drawing the legislation; it was getting the thing passed.

But the first round of getting it passed didn't go very well [in 1989] because the House and Senate couldn't concur. As a result of that nothing got done the first year. Let me back up now and say there was a precedent for what was going on and that was the early 1970s when you had the Shoreline Management Act and SEPA (State Environmental Policy Act) and those were good acts and served their purpose to an extent. And while they were models, they weren't good models because everything under SEPA and the Shoreline Management Act had to be settled on a case-by-case basis. You had local governments doing one process after another, and the purpose of the Growth Management Act was to have a system where you could anticipate growth, set standards, and be ahead of the game.

The first effort, I said passing the legislation failed; the House passed the Growth Strategies Commission and the first round of that didn't get through the Senate, but nothing passed the Legislature when you had all this growth going, and the initiative [in 1990]. And they had an initiative called Big Green and Big Green was the environmental initiative, which was just stopped in its tracks. It wasn't good—as you can imagine, it did too much in the way of stopping any growth.

**Diane:** Was this Initiative 547?

**Booth:** I don't remember the number.

**Booth:** Okay, but they called it Big Green. I worked against it. And I don't remember who it was said, "This isn't the way to do it. We didn't get it done last time, but I guarantee you if you vote against this initiative, we'll get something through the House." And we did get something through the House and the Senate for the Growth Strategies Commission, and I vetoed it. [While initially a commission to the Legislature as part of a budget item that passed during the 1989 session, Governor Gardner vetoed the item. By an executive order, Gardner then recreated the commission as a commission to the Governor.] So Dick Ford was appointed the chair of the Growth Strategies Commission.

**Diane:** And what was the fundamental idea of getting the Growth Strategies Commission together?

**Booth:** It was to have them interview—talk to anybody that was interested in the passage of the growth management legislation. And when that didn't take the first time, then we got Big Green. The other problem with—well then, we went back at it in 1991. In 1991—by this time a lot of work had been done on it—a lot of progress had been made, but it still had some flaws when we passed it to the Legislature and that included the unpopular facilities siting legislation and the regional planning process, the penalties for noncompliance. So that was in 1991 and I authorized sort of an ad hoc meeting to try to compare these issues and the long and short of it was that we got the Growth Management Act, after three years of working on it.

**Diane:** And what do you think are the most important pieces of the Growth Management Act? Looking back at it today, how has it affected land use or growth in our state?

**Booth:** I think immensely. First of all, you have the regional growth management...

**Diane:** The growth management hearings boards.

**Booth:** That's what I mean—one in Yakima, one in Vancouver, and one up here. They worked very well. The one in Eastern Washington worked particularly well, but they made a big difference—giving the municipalities and other government agencies a place to go when they had questions. It's resulted in more urban growth—not that it's perfect, but it's a lot better than if we hadn't had it.

**Diane:** Can you talk a little bit about how you worked with Joe King on the GMA?

**Booth:** Well, I respected Joe's fervor for it. As I said, he wasn't driven so much by the intellectual aspect of the idea as he was the challenge to get it through the Legislature. But he was also driven by the fact that people were driving him nuts [laughter]. He was not the calmest personality in the world, and they were on him all the time because the local governments simply didn't meet the demands. So he saw a good thing—he knew it when he saw it, it was a good deal and he had the benefit of having six chairs in the House who were hard working, good drafters. He just led the process, and just by force of will and threats and loud voice [laughter], made it happen. He wasn't too happy when we vetoed the first round, but he realized that that was the way it should be.

**Diane:** Just to give us some context. What other issues were important at this time for you? I know that you were working on education issues—this was in the late 1980s, early 1990s.

**Booth:** I had a statewide schoolteacher's strike—they were walking and the weather was perfect for that [laughing]. They were marching around that circle between the Hall of Justice and the Legislative Building with signs that were not very complimentary, but that took a lot of energy. Those were two major issues at the time.

**Diane:** Do you know who or what the opposition was to the Growth Management Act?

**Booth:** There was none. All the opposition was over the contents of the bill—penalties for noncompliance, siting regulations—but everybody was for the bill. Essentially that wasn't the problem, the problem was getting consensus on what was in the bill.

**Diane:** So can you tell me what you think the most important successes of the Growth Management Act are? When you drive around the state, how do you see that it's improved conditions and quality of life?

**Booth:** I think the emphasis on historic preservation was critical. I think one of the good parts about it was that the hearings boards were made up of people from both parties and from different persuasions. They balanced each other out well and to my knowledge they worked well.

**Diane:** And do you think it was better to have three hearings boards rather than one for the entire state?

**Booth:** Yeah, I do, absolutely because Eastern Washington is another state [laughter]. Yeah, and Southwest Washington is much different than the Puget Sound.

**Diane:** So you started out by saying that this was actually a very complex process.

**Booth:** Yes, it was.

**Diane:** Do you have any interesting stories about the dynamics or anything you'd like to share? Anything that was contentious or...?

**Booth:** Well, it was always contentious. So you needed a Joe King to deal with this contentious environment because that's his nature. He's 6 feet 8 inches and a big guy, and he didn't talk to you like this, [shows a distance of a few feet] he was right up against you like this [face to face], at least to me [laughter]. So there were a lot of humorous moments in that regard. Joe would come storming in saying, "And we've got to have this! What do you mean, you're going to veto this bill? I worked hard to get this done. Don't you know what I've done for you?"

[I replied,] "Yeah, I just want to make it better. We're not going to kill the bill. If you would calm down, we're going to put a commission together that has all the same things that your bill has in it, except we're going to change some things,"—and he huffed and puffed.

This is the Governor and this is a legislator, the war was fought here—refined here, and Joe comes to me

for balance. Me personally, I was at the end of the line saying, “If it comes to me in that form I’m not going to sign it. I’m here to balance things out.”

**Diane:** What first made you think, “Oh, we absolutely have to make some changes,” and start thinking about planning for growth?

**Booth:** My first year in the Legislature was when the Shoreline Management Act passed.

**Diane:** Oh, really?

**Booth:** Yeah, I was a protégé then and I remember being on the floor one time when there was just this acrimonious fight going on between the Democrats and the Republicans. That night a friend called and said, “I’ll take you out to dinner.” So we go out to dinner. We go into this restaurant, and there’s the three leaders of the Democrats and the three leaders of the Republican side having dinner together. So I said, “What are you doing?” [laughter] They were finalizing the Shoreline Management Act. They knew that they had to compromise to get it—they all wanted it. I live on the beach, I was born out here (on Vashon Island) and this beach hadn’t changed, and there were a lot of efforts to make it change. People wanted to put docks out, people wanted to develop. Vashon Island now has minimum five-acre lots. People didn’t like that at the beginning, but the character of the island is much different than the character of the rest of the county.

**Diane:** So if another state was thinking about developing a growth management act, what advice would you give them?

**Booth:** First I’d say you should have started 15 years ago.

**Diane:** Would you have said that to us as well?

**Booth:** No. There was kind of a flush of development in the late 1960s—there wasn’t much growth during the early 1980s—we didn’t do anything. But in the late 1980s and the early 1990s the state hummed. I was Governor at the right time. I didn’t have a budget problem like everybody else has [laughter]. I had money for education.

**Diane:** I’ll ask the question again. So if another state wanted to develop a growth management act, your advice would be start 15 years ago, and what else?

**Booth:** And let it run its own course. Don’t try to force it because the organic process of this one is still alive and well today. In fact, everybody over that three-year period got involved. Everybody had a chance to get something in the GMA. We didn’t rush the issue. We slowed down with that veto, put together a proper group of people, let the Legislature go through a session where they didn’t come to a resolution because we just sensed it was not ready yet. We ran the risk of an initiative and it came out well at the end. So I would just tell them let it go, stay on top of it, hire Joe King [laughter].

**Diane:** Oregon uses a top-down process for their growth management...

**Booth:** I don’t like that.

**Diane:** ...and we use a bottom-up.

**Booth:** I like the bottom-up. I think the people in the communities really have a better shot and if they don’t like the answer, the route for appeal is more likely to be fair.

**Diane:** So one size fits all does not work in this.

**Booth:** No, same with the WASL.

**Diane:** And the WASL is...?

**Booth:** The WASL (Washington Assessment of Student Learning) is you’ve got to pass it, you don’t get a

second chance [laughter]. That's my project right now.

**Diane:** Oh, it is?

**Booth:** I love it. I'm self-appointed. I just started meeting with people and drawing people together about six months ago. Now Governor Gregoire is asking me to have a report to her by the end of November. I got a good meeting from 30 people, some of the leaders in the business community, school community, and minority community—minority including disability.

**Diane:** And do you think they're going to end up agreeing with you that one size does not fit all?

**Booth:** Yes. I'm not a real academic. I got through school just fine, but didn't make any records. I'm a very good administrator, but there's people better than I am. I've got one sense that I still haven't seen anybody have better, that's instinct. I ran for office four times contested—beat three incumbents and Jim McDermott in the other.

**Diane:** Wow.

**Booth:** Nobody takes that on, but I just knew that that was the time to go. The reason I raised that for you is because I sense that the WASL's headed for a train wreck. And its disconnect between those that are sticking forcefully behind it and the rest of the world—world being Washington State. I think I can do something constructive to make this thing work.

**Diane:** Right. Is there anything else that you would like to tell us at all about the growth management period or how it's working or...?

**Booth:** I was just in Eastern Washington and had dinner with Judy Wall.

**Diane:** She's on the growth management hearings board for Eastern Washington.

**Booth:** She's perhaps the best one we've got. And she was untrained when she got it; trained herself, read volumes, and she's been on it 14 years now. The Governor's never appointed anybody to a third term, but if there's anybody that gets a third term, she'll be the one. She's really good at how it works. She knows how it works, what the problems are. She filled in her position, that's why she's had 14 years. So the last two of someone's term and then six and six. But I don't think it was the last two of someone's term, they staggered the first—they had three, one got a six-year term, one got a four-year term, one got a two-year term. She got the two-year term because she was not really qualified, but she's dynamite now.

**Diane:** Okay, that's all. Thank you so much.

**Booth:** Thank you.